

# Annual Report

1997 - 1998

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Information, Science and Technology Agency

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The Honourable Garde Gardom, QC  
Lieutenant Governor  
Province of British Columbia

May it please your Honour:

I respectfully submit the annual report of the Information, Science and Technology  
Agency for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998.

Honourable Graeme Bowbrick  
Minister responsible for the  
Information, Science and Technology Agency

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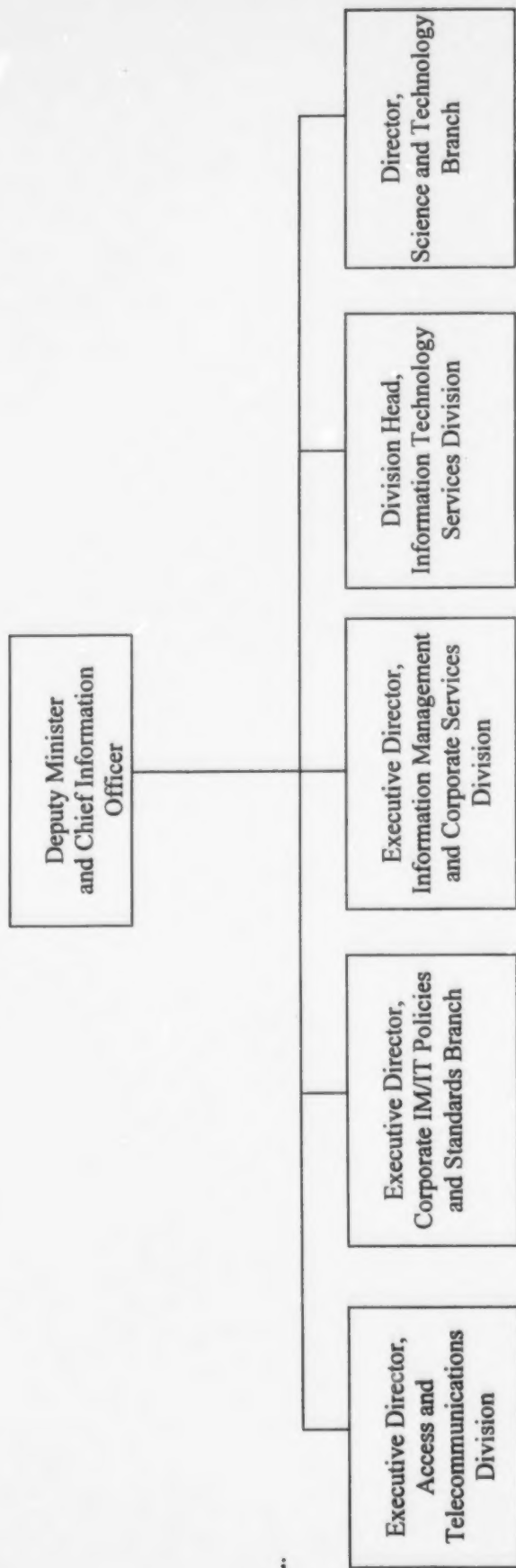
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For more information on the Information, Science and Technology Agency, visit  
ISTA's Web site: [www.ista.gov.bc.ca](http://www.ista.gov.bc.ca)

# INFORMATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGENCY

1997 - 1998



## **ISTA History and Organization**

The Information, Science and Technology Agency was established under the name Information and Technology Access Office (ITAO) in August, 1995. Its initial mandate was to lead the implementation of the Electronic Highway Accord. As a result, the position of Chief Information Officer for the Province was created. ITAO was part of the Ministry of Finance.

In February 1996, BC Archives (central archives service for the government of BC), Records Services (Information and Privacy Office), and Enquiry BC (responsible for providing basic information to all British Columbians on behalf of the provincial government) joined ITAO.

In November of 1996, ITAO was expanded again to include the Information Technology Services Division (formerly B.C. Systems Corporation, responsible for delivering information technology services within government), and the Science and Technology Branch (responsible for creating opportunities using science and technology to generate social and economic benefits to the province). ITAO reported to the legislature through the Ministry of Employment and Investment.

In April 1997, ITAO was renamed Information, Science and Technology Agency (ISTA). In February 1998, legislative responsibility for the Agency was transferred to the Minister responsible for Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

In fiscal 1997-98, ISTA's primary focus was on managing the province's Electronic Highway Accord. The Electronic Highway Accord is a major initiative that ensures all British Columbians – regardless of where they live – will have affordable access to the Electronic Highway. The Accord focuses on how British Columbians can best use and benefit from technology arising from the information highway. The objectives of the Electronic Highway Accord are:

- To provide universal, affordable access to communication networks and information services for individuals, communities and institutions including implementation of province-wide, public sector electronic initiatives related to education, health care and government administration.
- To increase and enhance B.C.'s information technology industry and substantially increase the number of businesses and jobs in the information and technology management industry.
- To increase effectiveness and efficiency of public services.

As well, during 1997-98, ISTA worked with B.C.'s science and technology community to advance the province's high tech sector and to enhance B.C.'s competitiveness in the global economy.

**Agency Highlights**

- progress in implementing the Electronic Highway Accord
- developing standards and policies for IM/IT management
- work to create PLNet
- improvement in the recruitment and retention of Information System employees in the public service
- leadership on Y2K compliancy within government
- a commitment by Deputy Ministers to increase information sharing within government

## **Information Management and Corporate Services Division**

The division is responsible for developing/implementing a cross-government strategy and policy framework for the management of information and technology (IM/IT), for corporate information management, for the Archives, and for transformational activities related to electronic commerce.

### **BC Archives**

**Purpose of Branch** Central archives service for the BC government. It provides access to records of enduring provincial value for both the provincial government and public.

#### **Major Highlights**

- The Law Society of B.C. and the Archives agreed to return the archives of the Society. The Law Society of British Columbia has donated materials to the Archives since the 1930s. At the time, the Provincial Archives was the only suitable repository for the Law Society's records.
- On January 13, 1997, the BC Archives discovered the theft of 20 valuable government records and damage to several of their historical volumes. Notifications were sent out to the major archives in the province and a security review was immediately undertaken.
- On June 16, 1997, the Legal Services Branch and the BC Archives began work on a protocol for public access to archival government records containing solicitor-client privilege. In March 1998, a Memorandum of Understanding for public access was signed by the Deputy Attorney General, and on April 5, 1998, by the Deputy Minister and Chief Information Officer.
- The Historical Vital Events Indexes were made available online. The Vital Events indexes consist of a searchable database to marriage registrations older than 75 years and death registrations older than 20 years. These registrations, beginning in 1872, contain valuable information for research in genealogy, family history, demography, etc.

#### **Objectives**

Provide Universal Affordable Access

#### **Achievements**

- Returned Law Society archives to the Society.
- Made available online the Historical Vital Events Indexes.
- Developed protocol on public access to archival records.

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

- Made available online the Historical Vital Events indexes.
- Signed protocol on public access to Attorney General records.



## Information and Data Management Branch

**Purpose of Branch** Provides leadership and support as the central agency in government for the administration of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Document Disposal Act. It leads the Information and Privacy and Records Management programs within the B.C. Government.

### Major Highlights

- Co-ordinated the review of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA).
- Set goals for eliminating unnecessary records presently held in off-site storage.
- Identified categories of records that may be routinely released to the public.
- Developed strategy for returning non-government records to the appropriate non-government body or archive.

### Objectives

Provide Universal Affordable Access

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

### Achievements

- Co-ordinated review of FOIPPA.
- Set goals for eliminating unnecessary records.
- Identified records for routine release to the public.

## Corporate IM/IT Policies and Standards Branch

**Purpose of Branch** Develops strategies, policies and standards for information and technology management within government enabling more cost effective, secure and convenient services for the public. It is also responsible for Chapter 8 of the Government Management Operating Policy – Information and Technology Management.

### Major Highlights

- Established the B.C. Government CIO Forum for public sector and Crown corporation CIOs to meet and discuss issues of mutual interest and to enhance collaboration.
- Developed the Electronic Mail strategy for government.
- Undertook a comparison study of the cost effectiveness of service offerings between ITSD and comparable private sector providers.
- Implemented the results of the Government Network and Computer Services Evaluation (GNCSE) an IT security analysis.
- Establish targets for IM/IT standards compliance to enable streamlining of back-office functions across government (USE-IT strategy).

### Objectives

Foster Development of The High-Tech Sector

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

### Achievements

- Evaluated cost effectiveness of outsourcing government computing services.
- Established the B.C. Crown CIO Forum.
- Developed Electronic Mail strategy.
- Evaluated cost effectiveness of outsourcing government computing services.
- Implemented the GNCSE recommendations.
- Established targets for IM/IT standards compliance.

## **Access and Telecommunications Division**

The Access and Telecommunications Division focuses on improving access for British Columbians to telecommunications services as well as fostering the development of B.C.'s IT sector. The Access and Telecommunications Division carries out activities to support three of ISTA's strategic goals. While achievements are recorded under a particular goal, many of the projects and initiatives support all goals simultaneously.

### **Major Highlights**

- Collaborated with federal and municipal governments and telecommunications providers to significantly improve quality of telecommunications access in communities throughout B.C., and to provide phone service to eight communities for the first time.

### **Objectives**

Provide Universal, Affordable Access  
To Telecommunications

### **Achievements**

- Through the federal/provincial Infrastructure Works program worked to provide lower cost telephone services and new services to remote communities. Completed upgraded service to Prince Rupert and working on supplying first-time service to six remote B.C. communities: Longworth, West Branch, Nazko, Oona River, Pink Mountain and Keithly Creek.
- Through the Enquiry BC Program provided high quality information and referral service to 1,219,126 callers between April 1996 and March 1997, continued to improve the Internet version of the B.C. Government directory launched in September 1996. (<http://www.dir.gov.bc.ca>), and began implementing six recommendations from a review to determine ways of improving access to government via the Blue Pages.
- Helped manage and administer the Community Access Program in partnership with the federal government.

## Objectives

Provide Universal, Affordable Access  
To Telecommunications

Foster Development of  
B.C.'s Information  
Technology Industry

## Achievements

- Facilitated an agreement between the B.C. Internet Association and government to implement the Provincial Learning Network such that it promoted development of the local high tech sector.
- Hired 80 students in more than 100 communities to promote awareness of the Internet and its uses. This included offering Introduction to the Internet classes at local libraries, training trainers to carry the awareness even further, and developing local library web pages.
- Worked with telecommunications providers and Internet service providers to clarify and affirm their role in implementing the Provincial Learning Network.
- Funded the B.C. Community Networks Association to develop a provincial server to support and encourage the connectivity of non-profit organizations in B.C.
- ISTA represented the province in a number of policy and regulatory proceedings before the CRTC. Major issues addressed were: extension of telecommunications services to rural and remote areas of the province; development of service standards for telecommunications carriers; implementation of a price cap regime for telecommunications carriers; and broadcasting license issues for a new television station in Vancouver.

## **Objectives**

Foster Development of  
B.C.'s Information  
Technology Industry

Increase the Efficiency  
and Effectiveness of Government

## **Achievements**

- Worked with the Library Services Branch and the B.C. Library Association to oversee delivery of the Community Concepts program that provided non-profit regional organizations and public libraries with assistance to learn how to establish and maintain comprehensive Internet community home pages.
- Supported the Minister's Advisory Council on Information Technology address topics such as telecommunications access, privacy and content issues.
- Led a detailed study to assess existing mobile and radio networks, identified future requirements, documented trends in the industry and within the public sector, and provided analysis of the various options for meeting future requirements.
- Implemented the recommendations of the Voice Task Force report which examined delivery of voice services within government. Recommendations included formalization of a stakeholder governance structure within government; examine/explore outsourcing of voice services; and improvements to billing processes.
- Implemented and completed an RFP process to select a vendor to take over delivery of teleconferencing services. A vendor was selected and a contract signed.

## Science and Technology Branch

**Purpose of Branch** The Science and Technology Branch creates opportunities using science and technology to generate social and economic benefits for the province.

### Major Highlights

- The Branch continued to concentrate primarily on its core mandate of supporting B.C.'s science and technology infrastructure and promoting awareness programs.
- The significant change was a new focus on careers in science and technology, which became a theme permeating many aspects of the Branch's business.

### Objectives

Foster Development of B.C. Information Technology Industry

### Achievements

- Continued to develop information technology and biotechnology clusters in B.C. by funding organizations and programs that strengthen linkages among academia, industry and government—partnerships essential to industry growth. Organizations and programs funded include: the BC Science Council, the Advanced Systems Institute; BC Biotechnology Alliance; the British Columbia Technology for Learning Society Computers for Schools program; and the First Job in Science and Technology program.
- Continued to fund applied research programs to stimulate and develop commercial application of science and technology. Programs and organizations funded include: the Technology Assistance Program; the Technology BC Program; the Fisheries Development and Diversification Program; and the Neil Squire Foundation.

## **Objectives**

## **Achievements**

**Foster Development of B.C. Information Technology Industry**

- Continued to fund organizations and programs that support technology transfer and innovation throughout B.C. This included funding for: seven regional science councils; three technology centres; university industry liaison offices; Networks of Centres of Excellence; and the Vancouver Island Advanced Technology Centre.
- Collaborated with BC Stats to develop a High Technology Sector Report looking at employment, outputs, exports and earnings in B.C.'s high technology sector from 1988 through 1995, the most recent year for which data are available.
- Revised the Market Assessment of Research and Technology Program to provide greater regional representation and ease of access to funding.

**Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government**

- Commissioned an independent review of scholarship programs related to high technology to support education in this essential area and to reduce overlap and duplication.
- Continued to develop western Canadian science and technology co-operation, particularly on information exchange and working together to influence federal science and technology investments in western Canada.

**Increase Involvement in Science and Technology Activities Across B.C.**

- Refocused science awareness activities to promote career opportunities in science and technology. Awareness programs affected included: Partners in Science Awareness, Science & Innovators in the Schools, and the Festival of Science and Technology.

## **Objectives**

Increase Involvement in Science and  
Technology Activities Across B.C.

## **Achievements**

- Provided funding to develop the Yoho - Burgess Shale Museum and Learning Centre near Field, a fossil quarry of international significance that was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981.



## **Information Technology Services Division (ITSD)**

The mandate of ITSD is to be a supplier of cost effective IT infrastructure services to B.C. government ministries and closely held agencies.

### **Demand Management Branch**

**Purpose of Branch** Responsible for ITSD's finance and administration; government's business aggregation as it relates to the provision of common IT infrastructure; customer support; Cross-government information systems; provision of electronic commerce through BC OnLine and a customer service centre for all ITSD services.

### **Major Highlights**

- Introduction of a new customer-approved cost-recovery methodology that substantially reduced the amount of administrative effort for the community of users and ITSD.
- Established government standard for Correspondence Tracking (CTS) application (also known as CLIFF).
- Leadership role in co-ordinating government's Year 2000 (Y2K) activities including Y2K Infrastructure for testing of government applications.
- Set up the \$17 million five-year Oracle contract delivering government standard database products to all of government.
- Continued expansion of products and services available electronically through BC OnLine included the Ministry of Health's Vital Stats Will Registry, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks' Site Registry, Land Title's Strata Plan General Index and Land Title's State of Title Certificate.

### **Objectives**

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

### **Achievements**

- Reduced the amount of administrative effort for our community of users by simplifying the cost recovery methodology.
- Initiated a cross-government standard Correspondence Tracking System.
- Converted Racing and Gaming Commissions and the Columbia Power Corporation in use of ITSD services at substantial savings to these entities.

## Network Services

**Purpose of Branch** Delivery of shared, secure and cost-effective Province-wide telecommunications for Ministries and other government agencies.

### Major Highlights

- Seven major cities throughout B.C. were connected to the ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) backbone network.
- PLNet implementation plan completed.
- Increased anti-virus protection for government.
- Developed significant security policies.
- Internal Business Plan for Voice Services developed as part of the Infrastructure Review and Evaluation Process.

### Objectives

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

### Achievements

- Installed a high-performance ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) backbone network in government offices in seven major cities throughout B.C.
- Prepared an implementation plan for the Provincial Learning Network (PLNet) which links 1,700 public schools, 22 post-secondary institutions and 20 community skills centres and provides a telecommunications pipeline to the Internet.
- PROVnet optimization continued. PROVnet is the Provincial Government's Voice network.
- Developed a policy, implemented technology and began monthly monitoring and reporting of access to inappropriate internet sites by government employees.
- Issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for anti-virus software for the provincial government. This resulted in a government-wide Master Standing Offer leading to the installation of over 10,000 copies of anti-virus software.
- Developed ITSP Security policy that was approved by the CIO.

## **Objectives**

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

## **Achievements**

- Began implementation of a cross-government, single authentication domain. Distributed administration was implemented with the Web Based Account Control (WEBAC) tool. Group Data Security Administrators (GDSAs) were trained to use WEBAC.
- The RFP for the proposed outsourcing of Voice Services (IT Infrastructure Services Review and Evaluation) was issued late in 1997. The project also required Voice Services to prepare an Internal Business Plan by which the Unit's performance could be indexed to the requirements of the RFP.

## Office Information Systems and Workplace Support

**Purpose of Branch** Office Information Systems and Workplace Support provides electronic mail and calendar systems, directories (electronic mail, telephone and e-commerce) central post office for all of government electronic mail and other related services. Additionally, responsible for ITSD's desktop support and technical advice to central agencies.

### Major Highlights

- The B.C. government common exchange service continued to grow and provide messaging services for over 8,500 users.
- The B.C. Government Telephone Directory service continued to grow and provide services to both the public and government. The web site serviced an average of over 190,000 queries each month.
- Participated in creating the Master Standing Offer (MSO) for standard personal computers configurations.
- Converted ITSD to the standard government desktop, LAN and BCGOV authentication models.
- Migrated ISTA and BC Archives to Windows NT.

### Objectives

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

### Achievements

- Met service levels and financial targets for the Office Information Systems and Workplace Support.
- Completed 10 migration projects of government organizations moving from their legacy email systems to government's common messaging system.
- Retired several OfficeVision products to reduce the overall email costs to government.
- Continued to maintain software currency with the Exchange, POPmail, and GEMS services.
- Consolidated Macintosh, OS/2 and Intel mixed environment at ITSD to a standard Intel platform reducing overall support costs to government.
- Developed the Virtual NT service offering.

## Technology Architecture and Information Services

<b>Purpose of Branch</b>	<b>Responsible for:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strategic planning and architecture for information technology and information services including the government IT Library; and administrative support to the Advisory Council on Information Management.</li><li>2. Development of a cross-government Windows NT infrastructure support organization.</li><li>3. Data processing; financial systems support; database applications support.</li></ol>
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### Major Highlights

- Conducted annual review and revision of government IT standards.
- Expanded government IT Library 'electronic services to the desktop' through enhancements to the IT Library web site thus overcoming geographical barriers to quality information services to a geographically disparate user base.
- Licensed IT Industry Research/Consulting services on behalf of the B.C. government, thus saving the expenditure of ministry-by-ministry licensing. Negotiated unlimited analyst contact from Gartner Group and META Group for the services to which government subscribes.
- Established a consolidated NT support organization drawing together resources from across the Division to create focus and momentum on developing a government-wide NT infrastructure.
- Launched a project to develop a B.C. government-wide Windows NT authentication service (BCGOV).
- Worked with the Purchasing Commission to develop a Request for Proposal document to evaluate the potential outsourcing of the OpenVMS service.

### Objectives

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

### Achievements

- Conducted annual review and revision of government IT standards.
- In 1997/98 the use by customers of the IT Library website to access IT and business information increased by 68% from the previous year. Approximately 600 unique users per month accessed the library website approximately 30 times/each for information and services.

## Objectives

Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government

## Achievements

- The IT Library negotiated government-wide contracts with IT Industry Research/Consulting firms such as Gartner Group and META Group which provided unlimited access to the published research and analyst contacts for the subscribed services. During the year, over 10,500 documents were accessed through the IT Library's computer and business electronic service offerings and nearly 200 hours of professional IT analyst services were utilized across government.
- 495 hours of staff time were spent training ministry IT employees on the content and effective use of the licensed services and IT Library website to ensure that the maximum information value is derived by government for the money spent on these various services.
- Over 900 hours of library staff time were spent in providing professional research services to government clients. This service supported major government initiatives such as the Asset Disposition and Revenue Enhancement/Review and Evaluation (REV) project and many technical Task Forces (Electronic Messaging, Electronic Forms, Desktop Strategies, Year 2000) as well as research required for IT decision-making across government.
- Over 6,000 books, videos and journals were circulated over the year to employees across government.

## **Objectives**

**Increase the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government**

## **Achievements**

- Government customers of the IT Library rated the overall service they received at 4.46 on a 5 point scale (where 5 was 'excellent') in an anonymous survey that was answered by over 150 active users of the services.
- Met service level targets for all infrastructure services managed (Open VMS, UNIX, NT).
- Consolidated existing customers and developed new business model and service description for NT Server unit.
- Increased facilities management support adding 45 NT servers to secure operational environment and established management and customer liaison for each one.
- Migrated cross-government servers to a new networked backup system.
- Met increasing government demand for Open Systems (UNIX) platform services.
- Expanded the Remedy "CAP" service, in response to ministry demands for automated issue tracking software services.
- Installed new manufacturer releases of shared financial application software packages on government enterprise servers.
- Provided timely and reliable technical expertise and services for the management of application databases running on UNIX, NT and OpenVMS platforms.

## **Objectives**

Foster Development of B.C.'s Information Technology Industry

## **Achievements**

- Worked with application owners to implement sound database management practices and consistent "best practices" across government.
- At the request of Treasury Board, worked with the Purchasing Commission to develop a Request for Proposal document to evaluate the potential outsourcing of the OpenVMS service.



## **Year 2000 Implementation Task Force**

**Purpose of Branch** To monitor and coordinate government efforts to eliminate threats to government systems posed by the year 2000 computer problem

### **Major Highlights**

- Development of Y2000 roles and responsibilities for ministries.
- Acceptance by all ministries of province of B.C. uniform date presentation standards.
- Establishment of Technology sub committee.
- Created Y2000 vendor product list website for use by ministries.
- Aided in development of ITSD Test Environments Options & Costs report.
- Government-wide application inventory incorporated into a provincial website.
- Assisted Camosun College in the development of Year 2000 curriculum.
- Acknowledgment of potential problem posed by embedded chips and involvement of B.C. Buildings Corporation in investigation and solutions.
- A Year 2000 Federal/Provincial/Territorial Committee was formed in January 1998.

### **Objectives**

1. To raise awareness of the threat to government posed by Y2K.
2. To aid in development of Y2K teams in all government ministries.
3. To conduct a government-wide inventory and analysis of Information systems for each ministry.

### **Achievements**

- During the 1997/1998 year The Y2K Implementation Task Force discovered the complexity of Y2K, that is no single approach to solving the Y2000 problem. Each ministry has different needs, technical platforms and software.
- A review conducted by the Chair of the Implementation Task Force of systems in Human Resources/Children and Families, Forests, Health and LDB determined the applications in each of these sites were of different complexity, had a different set of development standards, required specialized ministry application knowledge and operated on different computer systems.

### **Budget**

The estimated cost of government Y2K remediation at the end of the fiscal was \$72.2 million over three years.

## Communications

**Purpose of Branch** Supports Agency programs and initiatives by providing media relations, issues management, and advertising services to the Minister and Executive. Develops and distributes communications material on behalf of the Minister to stakeholders and the general public.

### Major Highlights

- Worked in partnership with representatives of Advanced Systems Institute, BC Biotechnology Alliance, Neil Squire Foundation, B.C. Cancer Agency, Science Council of BC, Centres of Excellence, Tech Centres, Island Technology Centre, BCIT, and VIATeC to increase involvement in science and technology activities across British Columbia.
- Promoted the Market Assessment of Research and Technology program and the Technology Assistance Program province-wide to foster development of B.C.'s high-tech industry.
- Produced events and collateral material to support the Youth and Internet pilot program in public libraries across B.C. in which youth are trained to train others on using the Internet.
- Supported regional and province-wide science fairs, as well as activities to promote public involvement in Science and Technology Week, to increase youth awareness of career opportunities.

